DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 308 UD 023 765

AUTHOR Vincent, Andrea; Orum, Lori S.
TITLE Selected Statistics on the Education of Hispanics. Hispanic Statistics Series No.6.
INSTITUTION National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Jul 84
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; Demography; Dropouts; Elementary Secondary Education; Enrollment; *Hispanic Americans; *Population Distribution; Postsecondary Education; School Demography; *School Segregation; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This paper presents recent data on the education and educational status of Hispanic Americans. The focus is on participation in elementary and secondary schools, and on the factors that prevent school completion and access to higher education. All included data are footnoted by source to facilitate further research, but the primary source of information for this overview is the Bureau of the Census. Statistics are organized under these headings: (I) demographic overview; (II) school enrollment; (III) educational conditions; (IV) aspirations and expectations; (V) segregation; and (VI) postsecondary education. The data presented reveal that Hispanics do not benefit from or participate in the nation's educational system to the same degree as other population groups. These data also reflect limitations of national efforts to collect, analyze, and publish data on Hispanics; specifically, regional and local statistics on the educational status of Hispanics are largely unavailable. (KH)

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ED249308

Hispanic Statistics Series No. 6

SELECTED STATISTICS ON THE EDUCATION OF HISPANICS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the educational status of Hispanic Americans, and quick and easy access to some of the recent and important data on education and Hispanics. The focus is on participation in elementary and secondary schools, and on the factors that prevent school completion and access to higher education. While the data in this paper should provide users with a basic profile of the educational condition of Hispanics, those requiring more information will find that data have been footnoted by source to facilitate further research.

This overview was designed for education policy makers, staff of community-based organizations, members of education associations and organizations, teachers, parents and members of the general public -- in short, for all those who need facts about the educational status of Hispanics relative to other population groups. Despite the fact that Hispanics are the most undereducated group of American children, and have an educational status unique from Whites and Blacks, separate educational data are not always available for Hispanics. Far too often studies and surveys report data in two categories -- White and minority -- leaving policy makers to guess the outcomes for Hispanics.

The existing data reveal that Hispanics do not benefit from or participate in the nation's educational system to the same degree as other population groups. From kindergarten through college, proportionately fewer Hispanics than either Blacks or Whites are enrolled in school. National data indicate that one-third of all Hispanics aged 18-21 have dropped out of high school; emerging local data suggest that the proportion in some urban areas may be more than twice that high. Of Hispanics 25 and over, only 45.3% are high school graduates; just 7.9% have completed college. High dropout rates, frequent below-grade-level enrollment, and an intensification of these problems among children of limited-English proficiency are some features of the Hispanic educational experience illustrated in this overview.

The data used here reflect some of the limitations of national efforts to collect, analyze, and publish data on Hispanics. The most apparent limitation is that the data are national in scope and do not portray the educational status of Hispanics in any one specific locality. Regional and subgroup differences are thus often submerged. The primary source of information for this overview is the Bureau of the Census; since the Census did not attempt to collect data on all Hispanics until 1980, a comprehensive longitudinal perspective on the characteristics of the Hispanic population does not exist. Though the Census collects data for Hispanics by subgroup, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Other Hispanic, Census publications usually collapse figures for subgroups into an aggregated Hispanic category. Though information based on a disaggregated Hispanic category may be available on Census data user tapes, the typical data consumer lacking a computer, funds or know-how has limited access to such materials. Recent budget cuts, resulting in fewer Census publications and reduced data availability, will limit any short-term improvement of this situation.

This overview was prepared by the Education Policy Analysis Project of the National Council of La Raza's Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation. Education Policy Analysis efforts are supported by funding from the Pew Memorial Trust, the Rockefeller Foundation and other foundation, corporate and unrestricted funds. Further information about this overview or the Council's Education Policy Analysis activities may be obtained from Lori S. Orum, NCLR's Senior Education Policy Analyst.

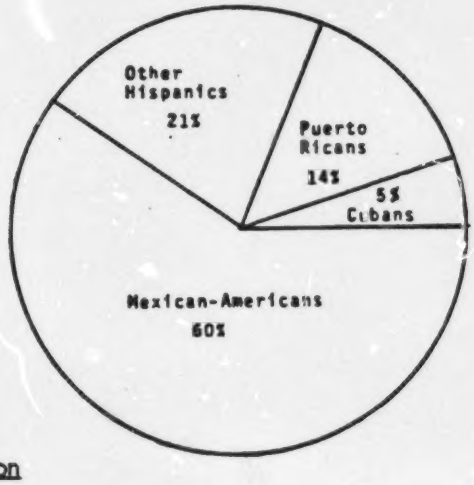
I. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

A. Overview

Most federal agencies did not systematically collect data on Hispanics until 1974 when Congress specifically directed them to do so. Information on Hispanics continues to be confused by the fact that, over the years, many terms have been used to describe Hispanic Americans. Spanish surname, Spanish origin, Spanish parentage, and other terms have all been used to try to identify Hispanic Americans. The 1980 Census relied on self-identification, defining Hispanic Americans as those who responded affirmatively to the question: "Is this person of Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent?"

According to the 1980 Census, Hispanic Americans then numbered about 14.6 million, and represented 6.4% of the population of the United States. Although united by Spanish language background, the nation's Hispanic population is diverse, and is composed of three major subgroups, and an increasingly large residual category. Mexican Americans are the largest group, comprising 60% of self-identified Hispanic population. Puerto Ricans account for 14%, and Cubans, 5.5% (See Figure 1.1). The remaining 21% of the Hispanic population is composed of individuals from Central and South America. [1]

Figure 1.1



B. Geographic Distribution

While the nation's Hispanic population is relatively small as a proportion of the total U.S. population, it is increasingly visible because of its location in major metropolitan areas, and the prosperous and developing Sunbelt. As of 1980, although Hispanics lived in every state in the country, 90% resided in only 15 states (See Figure 1.2). In addition, as of 1980:

- Two-thirds of all Hispanics lived in three states: 33.1% lived in California, 20.5% in Texas, and 11.4% in New York.
- Hispanics comprised more than 10% of the population in five states: New Mexico (36%), California (20%), Texas (20%), Arizona (16%), and Colorado (12%).

1

- Just 46 of the nation's 318 metropolitan areas had an Hispanic population of more than 10%. Of those 46 metropolitan areas, 41 were located in the Southwest, two in the East, one in the South, and one in the Northwest.

- In addition to clustering in certain locations, Hispanics are concentrated in certain regions according to subgroup. In 1980, 75% of Mexican Americans lived in California or Texas; about 50% of Puerto Ricans living on the mainland lived in New York; and 60% of Cuban Americans lived in Florida.

- Hispanics are the nation's most urban population. with 88% living in metropolitan areas. [2]

Figure 1.2

RANK ORDER OF THE 15 STATES WITH HIGHEST HISPANIC POPULATION

STATE	POPULATION	% OF NATIONAL HISPANIC POP.
California	4,543,770	33.13
Texas	2,985,643	20.45
New York	1,659,245	11.37
Florida	857,898	5.88
Illinois	635,525	4.35
New Jersey	491,867	3.37
New Mexico	476,089	3.26
Arizona	440,915	3.02
Colorado	339,300	2.32
Michigan	162,388	1.11
Pennsylvania	154,004	1.06
Massachusetts	141,043	0.97
Connecticut	124,499	0.85
Washington	119,986	0.82
Ohio	119,880	0.82

Source: 1980 Census

C. Age, Birth Rates, and Growth

Hispanics are a young and growing population. The dramatic growth in the Hispanic population reported in the 1980 Census triggered a flurry of public debate about the "rising tide" of Hispanics, and the "dramatic influx" of immigrants -- both documented and undocumented -- as a primary cause of the growth. However, the growth in the Hispanic population is primarily due to the following causes:

- The 1970 Census undercounted Hispanics by up to 40%.

- Hispanics have a lower median age than other population groups, resulting in a higher proportion of women of child-bearing age.

2

- Hispanic birth rates did not decline over the last two decades as did birth rates for the White and Black population.

Independent of continuing immigration, these last two factors ensure that the Hispanic population will continue to grow in the coming decades.

The age distribution of the Hispanic population is markedly different from that of the Black or White population. The distribution also varies among Hispanic subgroups (See Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

For Hispanics, about one person in nine is a child under five years of age. The proportion of the population that is of school age is greater for Hispanics than for all other population groups. This large proportion helps explain why, in an era of declining public school enrollments, the Hispanic proportion of the public school population is growing. It also helps explain why education is of such intense interest and concern to Hispanics. In addition, data show that:

- Hispanics have a median age of 22.1 years, as compared to a national median age of 30.6 years.

- Among the various Hispanic subgroups, median ages range from 20.7 years for Puerto Ricans to 33.5 years for Cubans. [3]

- In general, birth rates for Hispanics are considerably higher than for the population as a whole. For example, in 1979, there were 101 births per 1,000 Hispanic women ages 15-44, while the national average was only 67 births per 1,000 women ages 15-44. [4]

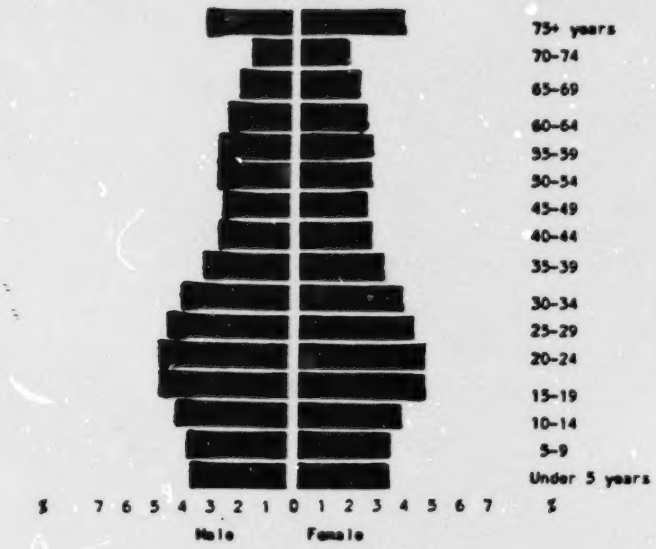
- Mexican Americans have the country's highest birth rate. In 1979, 119 children were born for every 1,000 Mexican American women ages 15-44. [5]

- By the year 2000, the Hispanic proportion of the U.S. population is expected to increase from 6.4% (1980) to between 8.6% and 9.9%. The lower estimate projects a total of 23.1 million Hispanics, of whom 2.8 million (12%) would be new immigrants. The higher proportion reflects about 26.9 million Hispanics, nearly double the 1980's 14.6 million mark, and assumes higher fertility and more new immigrants -- about 5.1 million, or 19% of the total. Natural growth of the youthful native Hispanic population accounts for the bulk of the population increase under either projection. [6]

- Despite predictions of increasing immigration, approximately 75% of Hispanics are native-born U.S. citizens. A 1980 study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of high school sophomores and seniors found that among Hispanic subgroups, Mexican Americans have the highest percentage of native-born persons (sophomores, 88.2%; seniors, 89.4%;), and Cubans the lowest (sophomores, 52.7%; seniors, 48.0%). [7]

Figure 1.3

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY



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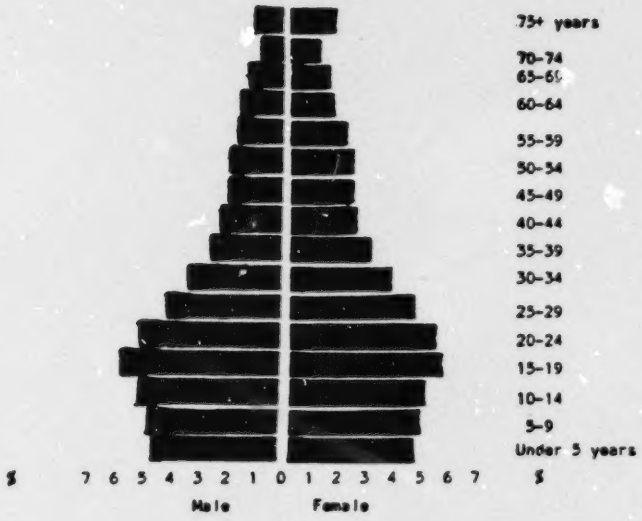

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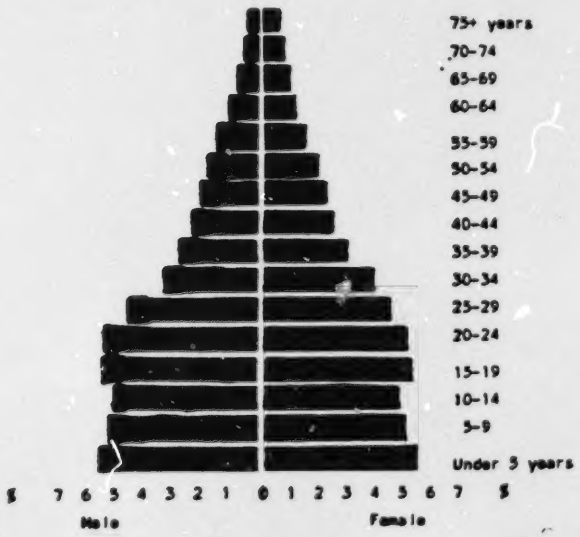

HISPANICS

SOURCE: 1980 Census

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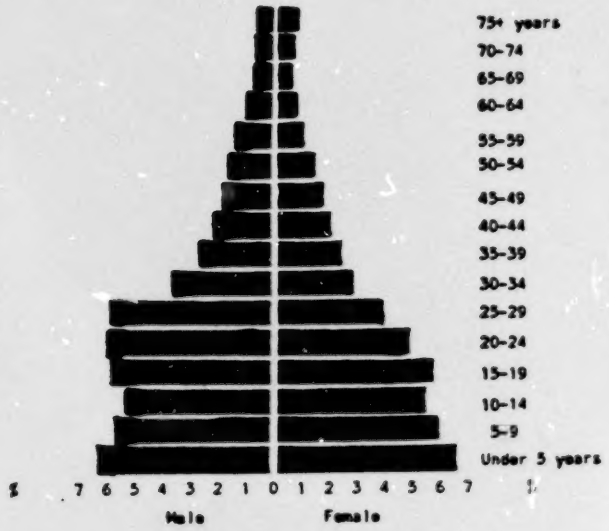
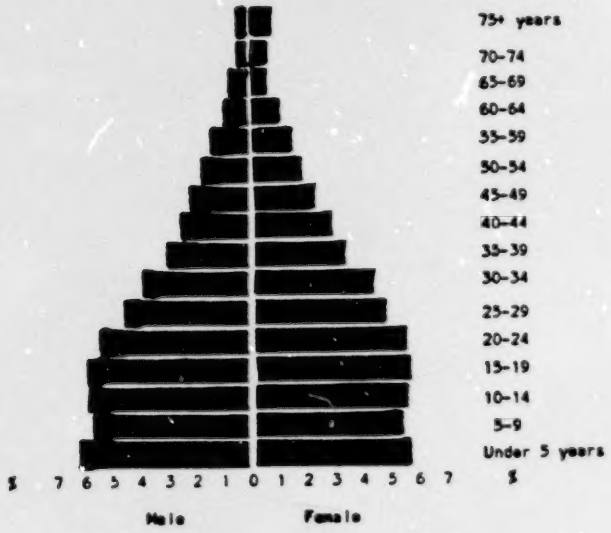
Figure 1.4

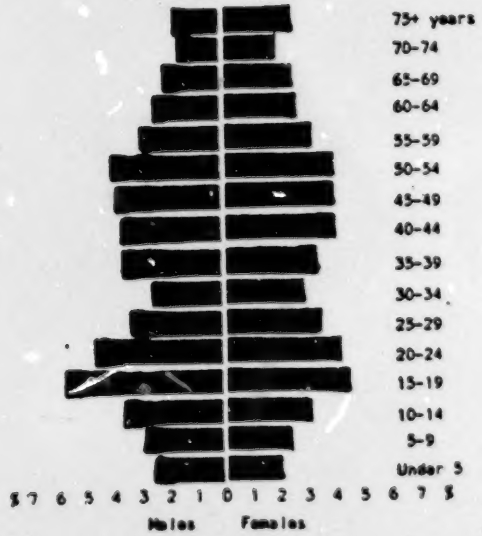
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND HISPANIC SUBGROUP



MEXICAN AMERICANS



PUERTO RICANS



CUBANS

SOURCE: 1980 Census

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- The nativity rate for Hispanics was probably even higher than that reported in that study because of possible confusion over the meaning of "U.S.-born" in the Puerto Rican context. The survey question did not differentiate between the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans are, of course, U.S. citizens by birth.

D. Language Characteristics

The extent to which U.S. Hispanics retain their native language distinguishes them from other ethnic minorities, and gives a different dimension to their educational needs. Although the large majority of Hispanics speak Spanish -- with varying degrees of fluency -- the 1980 Census figures show that most Spanish-speaking families in the United States also speak English. Hispanics differ from other language minority groups in that, although they acquire English at about the same rate as other groups, a very high percentage also retain native language skills. Studies have shown that:

- Most Hispanics speak English. In a 1980 study by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc., 47% of the portion of the sample that reported speaking Spanish also described themselves as bilingual, 20% indicated that they spoke enough English to "get by", and only 23% indicated that they were Spanish monolinguals. 8

- Spanish language background seems to affect the educational attainment of Hispanic students, whether or not they usually speak Spanish. A study by the U.S. Department of Education found that Hispanics from non-English language backgrounds were more than three times as likely as Hispanics from a strictly English language background to drop out of school. 9

- There is a wide variance in the estimates of the numbers of limited-English proficient (LEP) children. This results primarily from the different definitions and assessment measures used to identify LEP children.

- The definition of a LEP child used by the federal government to determine those in need of bilingual education specifies that LEP children are those who have "sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language to deny such individuals the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English." 10

- Many attempts to count the LEP population, including the 1980 Census, have relied on subjective assessments by a child's parent or teacher about the child's degree of English proficiency. However, the 1978 Children's English and Services Study (CESS) illustrated the unreliability of using a subjective assessment of language ability. CESS data indicate that 72% of children identified by others as speaking English very well, or well were, when tested, limited-English proficient. Additionally, only assessing English speaking ability does not take into account other English language skills such as reading and writing which are essential for school success. 11

- The CESS study estimated that in 1978 there were 1.7 million Spanish-language background children ages 5-14 with limited-English proficiency.

  - This number is projected to increase to 2.6 million by the year 2000. [12]

  - Texas, California and New Mexico have the highest percentages of limited-English proficient persons, and 11 states have LEP rates above the national average of 2.3% of the state population (See Figures 1.5 and 1.6). [13]

- Not all schools assess children's language proficiency to determine whether or not they need special language assistance programs. The CESS study found that only 36% of children the study identified as LEP had been assessed by their schools for English language proficiency.

- Data from the CESS illustrated that even when schools do assess students' language proficiency, not all these children receive special instruction. Even in those states with the greatest numbers of limited-English proficient students, two-thirds of LEP children ages 5-14 receive no special language services.

E. Income

Income statistics indicate that Hispanic families earn substantially less than White families, and the gap is not narrowing. Earnings for employed Hispanics average about 30% less than for Whites, and during difficult economic times as well as good times, unemployment among Hispanics is usually 60% higher than among White Americans, and earnings for employed Hispanics average about 30% less than among Whites. Earnings are especially low for Hispanic females. [14]

- In 1982, the median family income for the U.S. population was $23,433. For Whites, it was $24,603, for Hispanics $16,228, and for Blacks, $13,599. Hispanic family income was about 66% that of Whites.

- Hispanic Americans tend to earn less per hour than any other group. Thus, although Mexican American males have a higher annual income than Black males, they earn a lower hourly wage, but work more hours, on average.

- Women of every race and ethnic group earn less than men. However, Hispanic women employed full-time have the lowest incomes of any major population group; their median income in 1982 was just $11,363, as compared with $12,376 for Black women, $13,847 for White women, and $15,589 for Hispanic men.

- The percentage of Hispanic households headed by women varies substantially from state to state, from a low of 14.1% in Florida to a high of 42.6% in New York (1980 Census figures).

- Hispanic unemployment usually falls between rates for Blacks and Whites. The overall U.S. unemployment rate for June 1984 was 7.1% For Whites, the unemployment rate was 6.1%; for Blacks, 15.0%; and for Hispanics, 10.0%.

- A major cause of low income is occupation. Hispanics are less likely than non-Hispanics to be employed in professional and technical jobs (9% of Hispanics versus 17% of non-Hispanics) and in management positions (7% of Hispanics versus 12% of non-Hispanics), but more likely to be employed as operatives (23% of Hispanics versus 12% of non-Hispanics). Only 32% of Hispanics. versus 34% of Blacks and 42% of Whites. hold white-collar jobs.

Hispanics are almost twice as likely as White Americans to be poor, and recent economic conditions have contributed to an increase in poverty among Hispanics. According to the 1980 Census, although Hispanics constituted 6.4% of the U.S. population. In 1982 they made up 12.5% of America's poor.

- In 1982, 29.9% of Hispanics lived below the federal poverty level, as compared to 12% of Whites and 35.6% of Blacks. For Hispanics, this represented an increase from 21.6% in 1978.

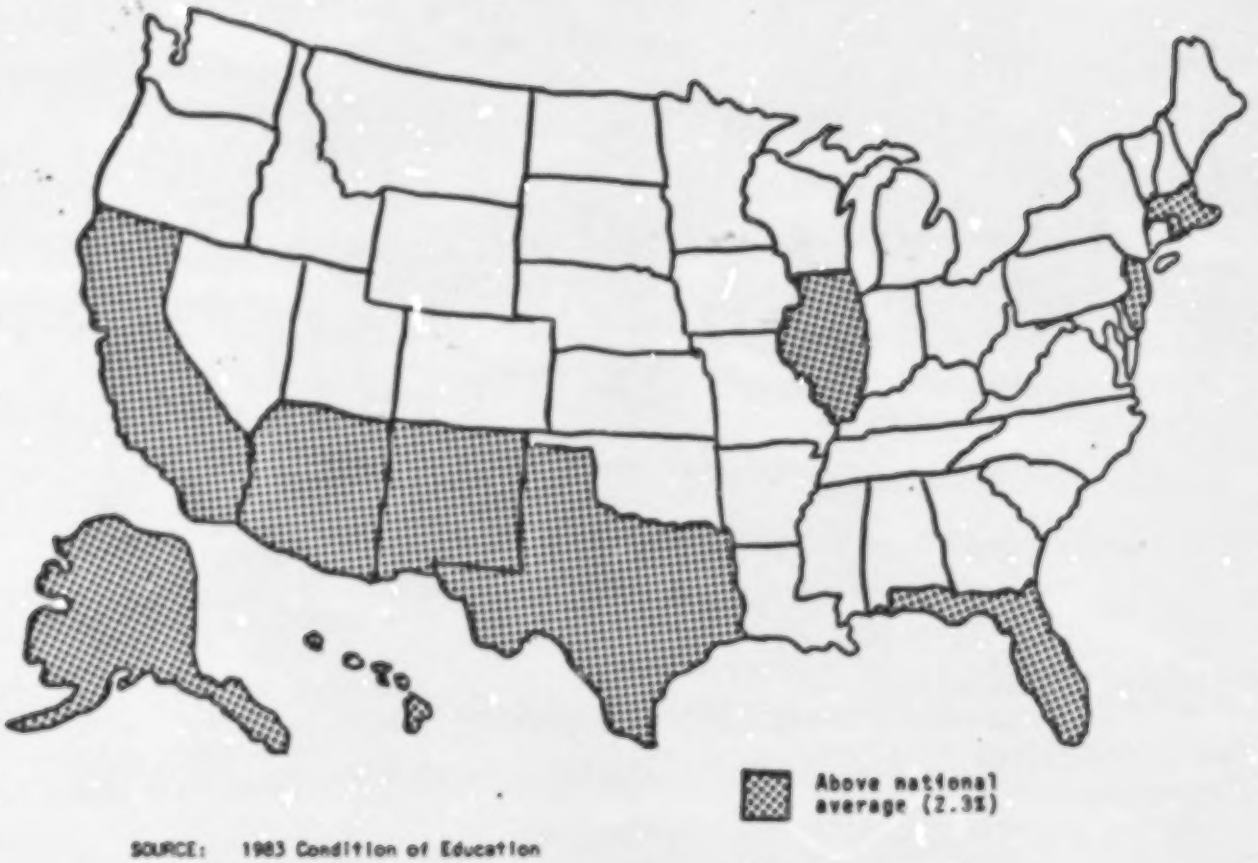
  .. The percentage of Hispanic families living in poverty increased from about one in five (20.9%) in 1978 to about one in four (29.2%) in 1982.

  .. Poverty levels are especially high among female-headed households, and they seem to benefit less from good economic times. In 1982, 60.1% of Hispanic households headed by women were below the poverty level; in 1978 the percentage was 53.3%.

Figure 1.5

STATES WITH LIMITED-ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

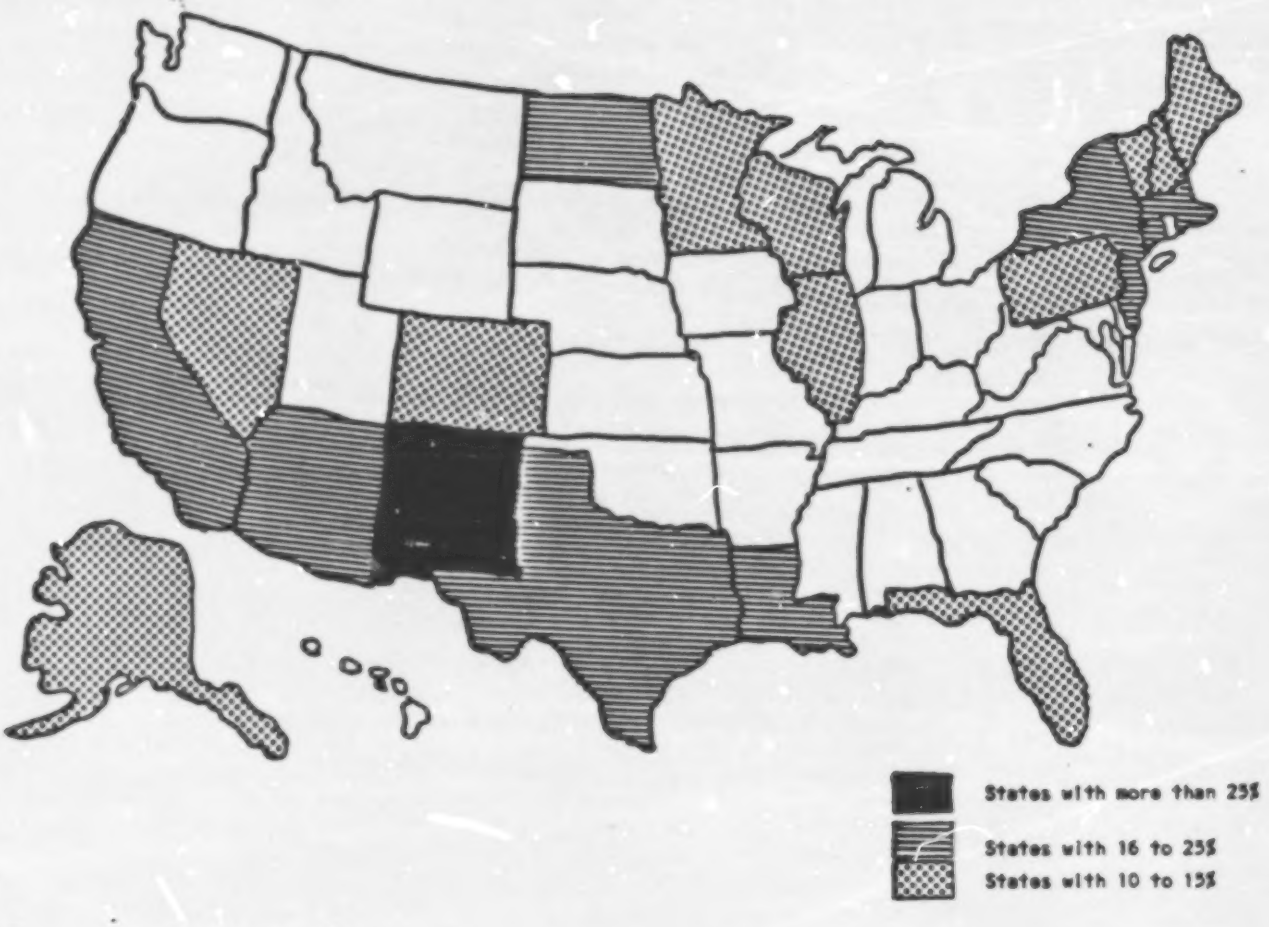


SOURCE: 1983 Condition of Education

Figure 1.6

SPANISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND PERSONS

AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STATE POPULATION



II. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

A. Overview

Of the 39.6 million children attending public schools in the fall of 1982, 8% or approximately 3.16 million were Hispanic. [1] In several Western and Southwestern states, Hispanic children accounted for a much larger proportion of school enrollment. In 11 states, Hispanic children comprised more than 5% of the state's total school enrollment (See Figure 2.1). [2]

Figure 2.1

HISPANIC ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STATE ENROLLMENT (Selected States)

STATE	% Enrollment Hispanic
New Mexico	46.5
Texas	30.4
California	25.3
Arizona	24.2
Colorado	15.3
New York	12.0
New Jersey	8.0
Florida	7.9
Illinois	6.1
Connecticut	5.8
Wyoming	5.3

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 1980 Elementary and Secondary Civil Rights Survey.

The 1980 Census indicated that approximately 90% of Hispanics were enrolled in public schools. According to Census Bureau data from 1979, 88% of those Hispanics enrolled in private schools, are enrolled in church-affiliated schools. [3] Data from the National Catholic Educational Association show that in the 1982-83 school year, Hispanic students represented 9.7% of elementary and 7.2% of secondary Catholic school enrollments. [4]

B. Enrollment in Special Programs

Hispanic children are less likely to be placed in programs for the gifted and classes for honor students than are White or Black children. There are a variety of factors which contribute to this situation, including the low educational attainment of many Hispanic parents, the high percentage of the Hispanic population which lives in poverty, and the high percentage of Hispanic children who attend segregated schools.

Language proficiency also plays a role in enrollment decisions. Many times such educational "tracking" begins early in elementary school before some very bright Hispanic children have become fully proficient in English. Also, fully two-thirds of children with limited-English proficiency do not receive any special language instruction to help them learn English; they are enrolled in "regular" classes and left to sink or swim. Not surprisingly, many "sink" and

special language instruction to help them learn English; they are enrolled in "regular" classes and left to sink or swim. Not surprisingly, many "sink" and are referred to remedial classes.

Additionally, very few special programs exist to serve Hispanic children who are still limited in English proficiency. Even where bilingual programs and testing instruments in Spanish exist, there is often nowhere to place such children once they are correctly identified since bilingual gifted and talented and remedial programs programs are a rarity.

According to 1978 data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Hispanic students comprised only 5% of all children enrolled in gifted and talented programs, although they then comprised 6.75 % of the total school population. In contrast, White students comprised 75.3% of the total school population but 81% of enrollments in gifted and talented programs. 5

Hispanics are similarly underrepresented in high school honors classes. The 1980 High School and Beyond Survey found that Hispanic high school seniors, as compared to all other racial/ ethnic groups, were the least likely to participate in honors mathematics and English courses (See Figures 2.2 and 2.3). 6

In addition to having the lowest participation rates in advanced courses, the difference between enrollment levels in honors and remedial courses is substantially greater for Hispanics than for Whites. Of White high school seniors, 23.4% were enrolled in honors mathematics, and 29.3% were enrolled in remedial mathematics. On the other hand, 18% of Hispanic seniors took honors courses in mathematics, while almost twice that percentage (37.3%) took remedial classes in the same area. 7

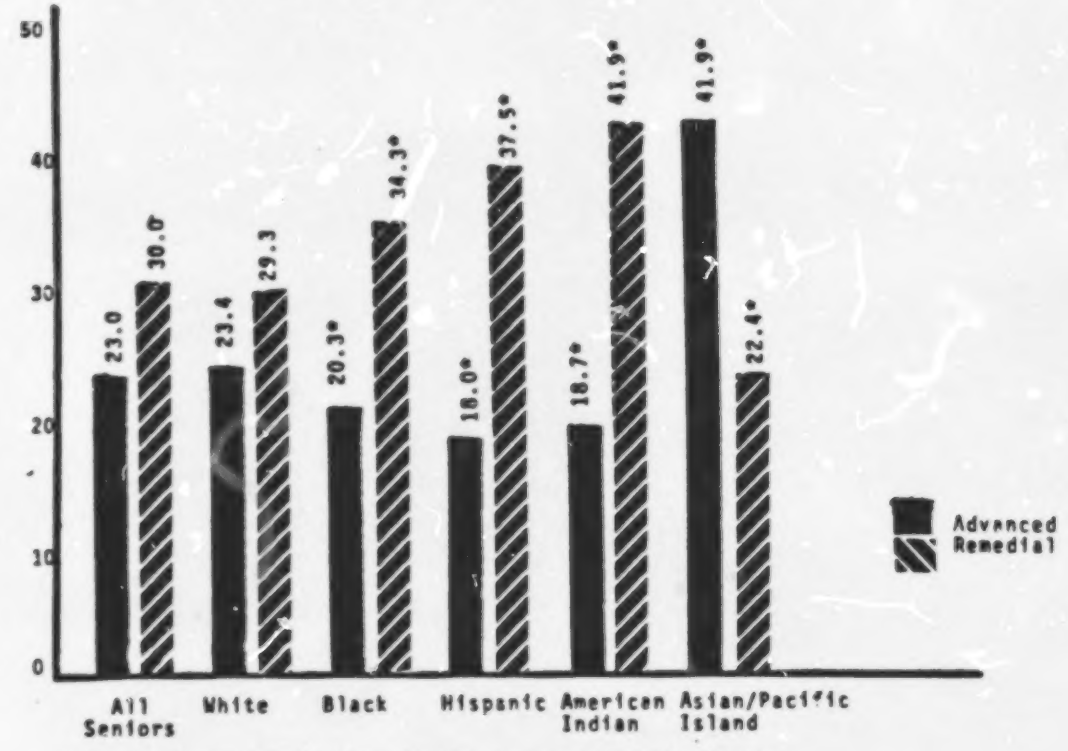
C. Secondary School Curriculum

Choice of high school curriculum has important implications for a student's future academic options. In most schools, students choose — or their counselors choose it for them -- their academic track early in high school. Academic, general, and vocational curricula generally prepare students for very different futures. Unfortunately, Hispanic students are disproportionately prepared for futures that do not include higher education. For example, studies have shown that:

- By their senior year in high school, 73.8% of Hispanic youth have enrolled in curricular programs that make a college education improbable. 8
- Of these, 40.5% of Hispanic high school seniors are enrolled in a general high school curriculum. Another 31.5% are in occupational preparatory programs, with the majority taking courses in business or office occupations. 9
- Only 26.2% of Hispanic high school seniors are in a college-preparatory curriculum as compared to 39.3% of Whites, 32.4% of Blacks, and 51.8% of Asians. With only 23.7% enrollment in college-preparatory programs, American Indians are the only group less likely than Hispanics to attend college (See Figure 2.4). 10

Figure 2.2

REMEDIAL AND ADVANCED COURSES IN MATHEMATICS TAKEN BY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: 1980

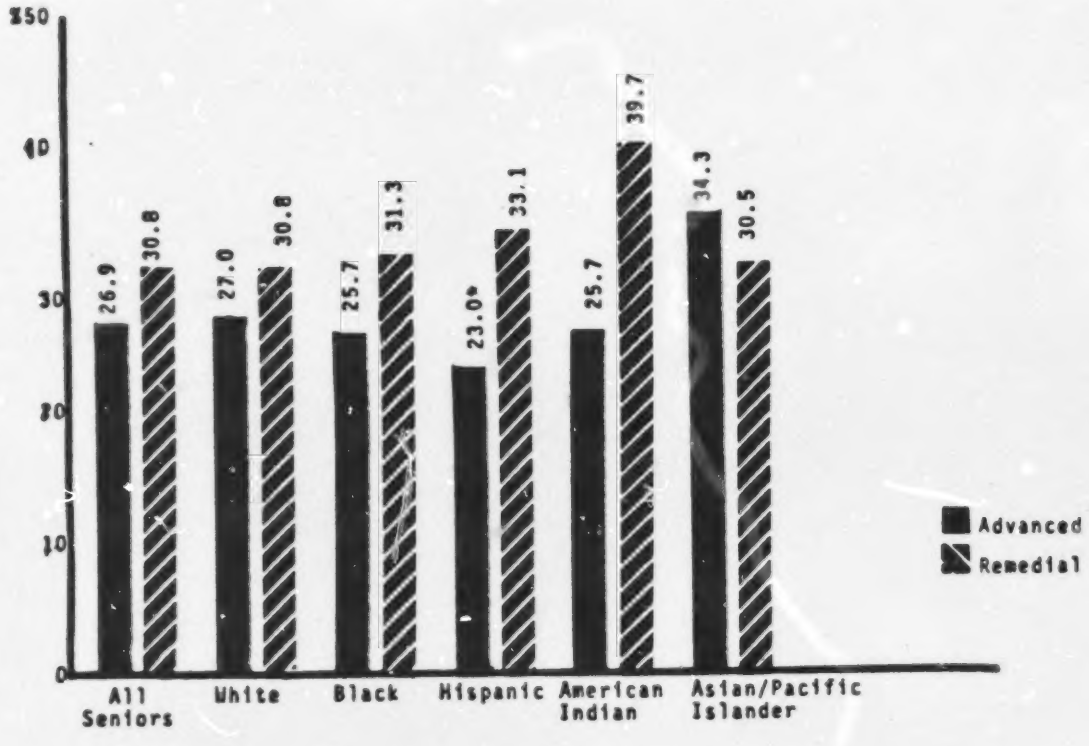


* Represents significant difference from the White population at the .05 level

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the High School and Beyond Study. 1980.

Figure 2.3

REMEDIAL AND ADVANCED COURSES IN ENGLISH TAKEN BY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: 1980



* Represents significant difference from the White population at the .05 level

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the High School and Beyond Study. 1980.

Figure 2.4

CURRICULAR PROGRAM OF SECONDARY SCHOOL SENIORS
BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

	College Preparatory	General	Vocational
White	39.3%	36.6	22.8
Black	32.4	34.5	31.1
Hispanic	26.2	40.5	30.6

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. High School and Beyond Study. 1980; unpublished tabulations.

III. EDUCATIONAL CONDITION

A. Overview

By almost any measure, Hispanics are the most undereducated group of Americans. The educational condition of Hispanics has been characterized by below-grade-level enrollment, high dropout rates, high rates of illiteracy, and a low number of school years completed.

B. Enrollment Below Grade Level

Children who are significantly older than the average age for a given grade are said to be enrolled below grade level. Such enrollment may result from illness, frequent moves, or other factors which interrupt education. Frequently it is caused by a child "failing" a grade and being kept back to repeat the failed year. Children who are enrolled below grade level are often significantly older than their classmates, frequently experience discipline problems, boredom and low self-image, and run a high risk of eventually dropping out of school. In addition, studies have shown that:

- School delay and and not socioeconomic background is the most important determinant of student achievement. Since below-grade-level enrollment occurs frequently among Hispanic youth, school delay is an important factor in the undereducation of Hispanics. [1]

- At each grade level there is a larger percentage of Hispanic children enrolled below grade level than White children. This is especially true for Hispanic youth aged 14-20. [2]

- Approximately 10% of Hispanic children aged 8-13, and about 25% of those aged 14-20, are enrolled below grade level. [3]

- An NCES study of Hispanic achievement in American high schools discovered that 12.1% of Hispanic high school sophomores were enrolled two years below the grade level appropriate for their age, as compared to only 4.1% of White sophomores. [4]

- Likelihood of being enrolled below grade level increases if children were born outside the United States, speak a non-English language, or have parents with low educational attainment.

- Among Hispanics 8-13 years old living in homes where Spanish is sometimes or usually spoken, one-tenth were enrolled below the expected grade level for their age as of 1976. For 14-20 year olds, one-fourth were behind in school (See Figure 3.1). [5]

- Enrollment below grade level also varies by Hispanic subgroup. Puerto Rican and Mexican American youth are more likely to be enrolled two or more years below grade level than are other Hispanics. [6]

- Data from the 1976 Survey of Income and Education indicate that as many as 25% of Mexican American and Puerto Rican youth 14-20 years old were enrolled two or more years below grade level. [7]

Figure 3.1

DELAYED EDUCATION BY LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS

Percent of Hispanic and White students aged 8-20 enrolled two years or more below expected grade level, by language characteristics

Language Characteristics	Percent Enrolled Below Expected Grade Level /a 8 to 13 years		14 to 20 years	
	Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic
Mono-English language background /b	*	5	15	9
Non-English language background /c	10	7	25	10
Speak only English themselves /d	*	*	20	10
Speak a non-English language themselves /e ..	12	8	27	13

*Percent not shown where the estimate is less than 20,000 persons.

a/ Below expected grade level for age is defined as: Eight years or older and enrolled in the first grade. nine years or older and enrolled in the second grade, etc. Also included are 20-year olds who were enrolled in the first year of college.
b/ English is the only language spoken in the household currently.
c/ A language other than English is sometimes or usually spoken in the household currently.
d/ The child speaks only English.
e/ The child sometimes or usually speaks a language other than English.

Source: Survey of Income and Education. Spring 1976.

C. Dropout Rates

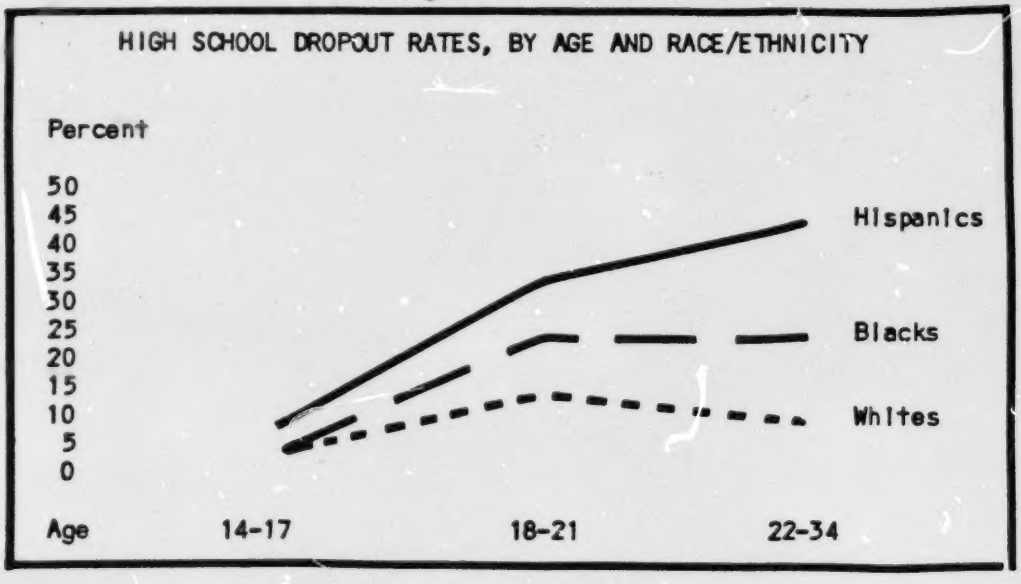
A disproportionately high percentage of Hispanic youth leave high school without a diploma. Hispanic youth also drop out of high school at earlier ages than do either White or Black youth. For example:

- Data from a 1979 Census Bureau study showed that 35% of Hispanics 18-21 had dropped out of high school as compared with 25.5% of Blacks and only 15.5% of Whites. [8]

- Hispanics appear to drop out of school earlier than do other groups of students. Nine percent of Hispanics 14-17 years old have left school without graduating, as compared to 5.3% of White youth and 5.2% of Black youth (See Figure 3.2). [9]

- Although these dropout rates are very high, and reflect a large gap gap between Hispanics and Whites, dropout rates for older Hispanics are even higher. For example, Hispanics born between 1951 and 1955 had only about the same chance of completing high school (58.6%) as Whites born between 1920 and 1924 (59.6%). [10]

Figure 3.2



For certain groups of Hispanics, such as women, non-metropolitan area residents, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and non-English speaking Hispanics, dropout rates are especially high. Since much of the available data on Hispanic dropouts is based on an aggregated Hispanic category, dropout rates for these subpopulations are likely to be substantially higher than figures based on aggregated data. For example:

- By age 17, 20.9% of Hispanic females have left high school without a diploma. Hispanic females are more likely to drop out of school than are Hispanic males, and are more likely than other groups of women to be high school dropouts. In 1979, of Hispanic women 16-24, 34.2% were high

school dropouts as compared to 31.5% of Hispanic males, 12.8% of White females and 20% of Black females. 11

- Of non-metropolitan Hispanics aged 14-34, 44.8% have dropped out of high school as compared with only 15.2% of White non-metropolitan youth. 12

- Approximately 50% of Mexican American and Puerto Rican youth never finish high school. 13

- Data suggest that school attrition rates for Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans begin as soon as junior high school, and as early as ages 14 and 15. These rates accelerate at ages 16 and 17. In comparison, Black dropout rates are almost identical to those of Whites until age 17, when they increase sharply (See Figure 3.3). 14

- Language background is also related to high school completion. Hispanics with a non-English backgound, who usually or sometimes speak Spanish, are about three times as likely to drop out of school as Hispanics with a an English-only background. Even those Hispanics with a non-English background who no longer speak Spanish are less likely than Hispanics with an English-only background to complete high school. 15

Figure 3.3

PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS, BY AGE AND RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP
(Weighted Five-Year Averages. 1794-1978)

Group	Age											
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Whites	1%	2	6	10	13	16	18	17	18	18	18	18
Blacks	1	2	6	12	20	27	27	30	31	32	29	28
Mexican Americans	2	6	26	23	31	41	43	45	50	51	56	53
Puerto Ricans	2	4	12	19	36	42	52	49	54	62	41	56

Note: A dropout was defined as any person who, at the time of the survey, was not a high school graduate and was not enrolled in school.

Source: Minorities in American Higher Education. Alexander Astin. Jossey-Bass 1982.

D. Years of School Completed

Not only are dropout rates higher than for other population groups, but since Hispanics leave school at earlier ages, Hispanics complete fewer years of school than other population groups. The median number of school years completed by Hispanics 25 years and over is 10.3 years, compared to 11.9 years for Blacks, and 12.5 years for Whites. 16 Additionally, studies on school completion show that:

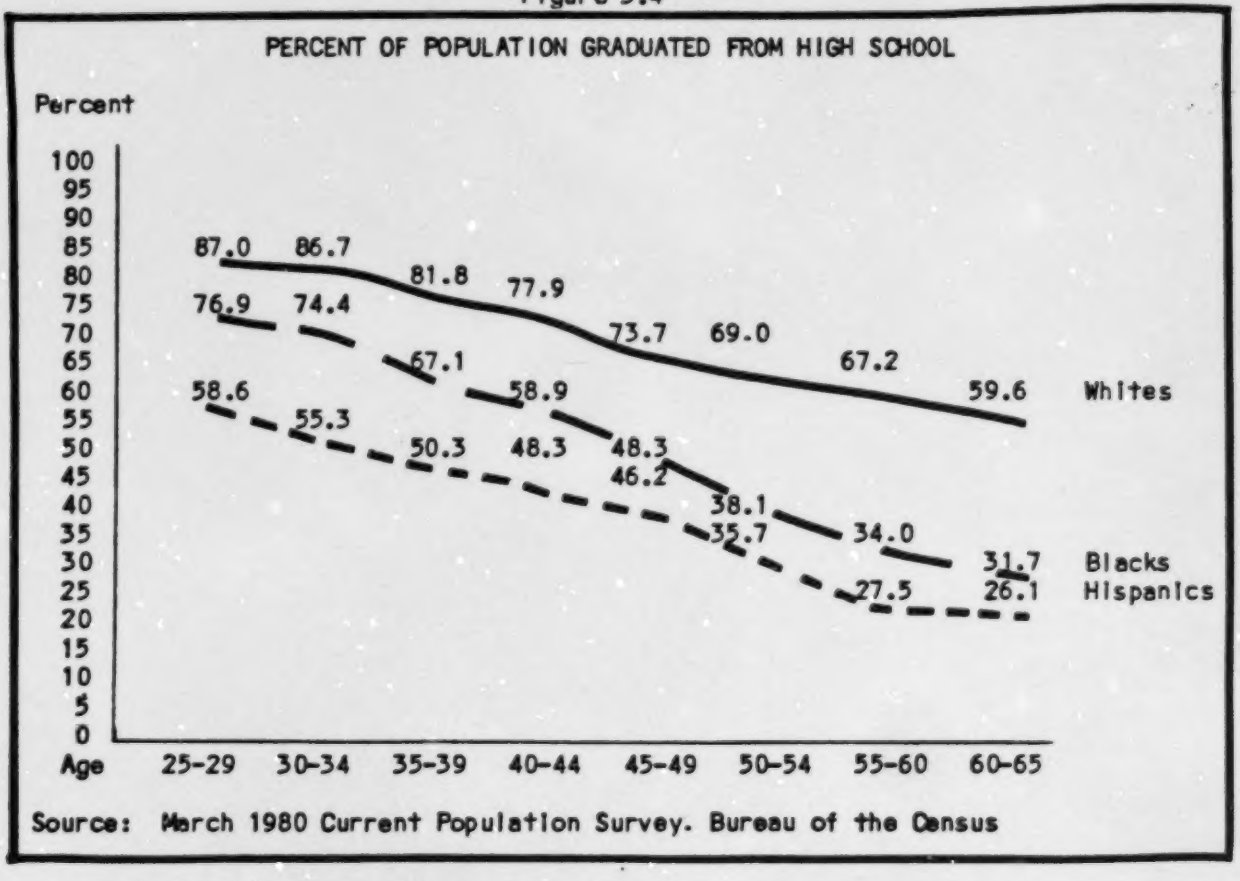
- Only 45.3% of Hispanics 25 years and older have completed high school as compared to 51.2% of Blacks and 70.5% of Whites (See Figure 3.4). [17]

- The number of school years completed by Hispanics living in non-metropolitan areas, especially Hispanic farmworkers, is far less than the amount of schooling completed by the typical Hispanic:

  - Census Bureau studies in 1978 showed that, on the average, Hispanic farmworkers 25 years and over had completed only 5.4 years of school; one in five migrant workers over 30 had never been in a classroom. [18]

  - A 1978 study by the Department of Agriculture found that just 35.5% of all non-metropolitan Hispanics had completed four or more years of high school as compared to 63% of non-metropolitan Whites. [19]

Figure 3.4



Source: March 1980 Current Population Survey. Bureau of the Census

E. Functional Illiteracy

There are a variety of ways to describe and measure functional illiteracy. Most commonly, it is defined as not having completed fifth grade. However, recognizing that fifth-grade reading skills are not adequate for competent

participation in our increasingly complex society, some researchers are beginning to define literacy based on practical and functional criteria. Since none of these definitions includes literacy in a non-English language, it is very likely that many Hispanics are classified as illiterate, when in reality they may be literate in Spanish but limited in English proficiency. However, by almost any definition of illiteracy. Hispanics have disproportionately high rates of illiterate individuals:

- If illiteracy is defined by failure to complete the fifth grade, data from 1979 classify 17.8% of Hispanics, and 1.8% of Whites 25 years and older as functionally illiterate. Non-metropolitan Hispanics have an especially high rate of illiteracy using this standard; 26% are functionally illiterate, compared to 3% of the White rural population. 20

- Another 1979 study found that of the various Hispanic subgroups, Mexican Americans have the highest rate of functional illiteracy (23.1%) followed by Puerto Ricans (15%), Cubans (9.3%), and other Hispanics 5.9%). 21

When literacy is defined by such practical criteria as ability to interpret a bus schedule, address a letter so that it reaches its destination, or read an explanation of finance charges from a bank, 56% of Hispanic Americans could be considered functionally illiterate, in comparison with 47% of Blacks, and 16% of Whites. 22

IV. ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

A. Overview

Hispanic youth have aspirations, expectations, and post-high school plans similar to those of other youth. However, their self-assessed ability to fulfill these aspirations is below that of other population groups. Data from the 1980 High School and Beyond Study, a national longitudinal study following the progress of several groups of youth through high school, college, and the transition from post-secondary education to work, clearly reflect these differences.

B. Occupational Aspirations

Aspirations reflect dreams -- what students would like to accomplish -- and not necessarily what they may actually expect to achieve. It is on this measure that there are the fewest differences between Hispanics, Blacks and Whites:

- Occupational aspirations reported by Hispanic, Black, and White high school seniors are generally about the same. [1]

- A similar percentage of Black, White, and Hispanic students have career aspirations requiring a college education; 34.4% of Hispanics, 38.9% of Blacks, and 39.3% of Whites aspire to professional or advanced professional occupations (See Figure 4.1). [2]

Figure 4.1

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS FOR AGE 30

Occupation	% of Hispanic Students	% of Black Students	% of White Students
Clerical	12.3	12.3	9.2
Craftsman	8.9	5.9	8.5
Farmer	2.2	.5	2.2
Homemaker	2.0	1.2	3.2
Laborer	1.9	1.1	2.2
Manager, Admin.	5.1	8.2	6.9
Military	2.8	4.3	1.6
Operative	4.2	2.7	2.6
Professional I	22.7	27.3	26.7
Professional II (Advanced)	11.7	11.6	12.6
Proprietor-Owner	3.5	3.0	4.1
Protective Services	2.5	1.0	1.8
Sales	2.0	2.4	2.1
School Teacher	3.9	2.9	4.1
Service	3.8	3.7	3.5
Technical	8.8	10.0	7.8
Not Working	0.1	0.2	1.0

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, "High School and Beyond Study," 1980.

C. Educational Expectations

Expectations reflect reality -- a student's best judgment about what is likely to come to pass. Differences among population groups are more apparent using this measure. Data from the 1980 High School and Beyond Study show that:

- Expectation of educational attainment varies among Hispanic subgroups. Cubans have much higher educational expectations than do Mexican Americans. Puerto Ricans, or other Latin Americans; 54.9% of Cubans expect to receive some level of college education as compared to 33.1% of Mexican Americans, 34.5% of Puerto Ricans and 36.7% of other Latin Americans (See Figure 4.2). 3

Figure 4.2

AMOUNT OF SCHOOLING YOU THINK YOU'LL GET

Level	% by Race/Ethnicity			% by Hispanic Subgroup			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Latin American
Below High School	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.7	1.0
High School Graduate	19.7	16.3	24.0	23.5	26.6	12.1	26.4
Voc. Ed.- Less than 2 years	8.3	7.0	8.2	9.1	8.0	3.3	7.6
Voc. Ed.- More than 2 years	10.9	14.5	13.1	14.9	14.3	7.6	10.6
College - Less than 2 years	2.6	2.5	4.1	4.5	3.9	4.9	4.2
College - 2 years +	12.5	11.5	13.4	13.4	11.6	16.5	13.4
College Graduate	26.0	24.3	19.2	19.0	15.8	22.1	20.0
Master's	11.2	11.9	9.0	8.6	11.2	17.2	7.2
Ph.D., MD or Adv. Degree	8.4	11.3	7.8	6.1	7.5	15.6	9.5

SOURCE: "High School and Beyond," 1980.

- Although a similar percentage of Blacks (52.5%), Whites (54.3%) and Hispanics (53.5%) expect some level of college education, their expectations for completing college differ. Only 36% of Hispanic youth expect to be college graduates or obtain advanced degrees, compared to 47.3% of Black, and 45.6% of White youth. [4]

D. Plans and Belief in Ability

Though a similar percentage of Hispanic, Black, and White students plan to go on to college, Hispanic students appear to be more uncertain of their ability to complete college than either Whites or Blacks:

- According to 1980 data, 65.6% of Hispanic, 71.6% of Black, and 68.4% of White high school seniors planned to enter college immediately, or one to two years after high school (See Figure 4.3). [5]

- Of the 65.5% of Hispanic seniors planning to go to college, only 36.9% felt they definitely had the ability to finish their college education (See Figure 4.4). [6]

- Another 28.4% of Hispanic seniors were not sure, doubted, or felt they definitely could not complete college, compared to 19.4% of Black students and 18.9% of White students (See Figure 4.5). [7]

- Self-assessed ability to complete college also varies among Hispanic subgroups. Compared to other Hispanic subgroups, Mexican American youth were the least likely to feel capable of finishing college (See Figure 4.5) [8]

- The educational expectations of Hispanic Americans correspond to their attitudes about their ability to complete college. Approximately the same percentage of Hispanic high school seniors who expected to receive college degrees (36%) felt they definitely had the ability to complete college (See Figure 4.4) [9]

Figure 4.3

PLAN TO GO TO COLLEGE IN THE FUTURE

When	% of Hispanics	% of Blacks	% of Whites
Next Year	52.9	59.3	59.5
After 1 Year	8.4	8.0	6.9
After 2 or more Years	4.3	4.3	2.0
Don't Know	12.9	13.3	10.0
No	21.4	15.1	20.5

SOURCE: "High School and Beyond," 1980.

Figure 4.4

PLANS, EXPECTATIONS, AND ABILITY TO COMPLETE COLLEGE

%	Plan to Go to College	Expect to Complete College	Definite Ability to Complete College
White	68.4	45.6	48.5
Black	67.3	47.5	49.6
Hispanic	61.3	36.0	36.9

SOURCE: "High School and Beyond," 1980.

Figure 4.5

BELIEF IN ABILITY TO COMPLETE COLLEGE

	% by Race/Ethnicity			% by Hispanic Subgroup			
Response	White	Black	Hispanic	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Latin American
Yes, Definitely	48.5	49.6	36.9	33.0	46.4	30.8	38.1
Yes, Probably	32.6	30.9	34.6	37.3	27.0	33.5	32.4
Not Sure	12.9	14.1	21.3	22.4	19.1	10.1	22.4
I Doubt It	3.7	3.2	4.3	4.7	1.6	5.4	4.3
No, Definitely	2.3	2.1	2.8	2.6	5.8	0.2	2.8

SOURCE: "High School and Beyond," 1980.

E. Fulfillment of Student Expectations

Comparing the educational expectations of high school seniors in 1972 with their attainment in Fall 1979, the National Longitudinal Survey of the Class of 1972 found that Hispanics were much less likely to fulfill their expectations of receiving a college degree than either Blacks or Whites: 67% of Hispanic seniors expecting college degrees did not receive degrees, versus 63% of Blacks, and 43.6% of Whites. [10]

V. SEGREGATION

A. Overview

Although school segregation declined for Black Americans over the last decade, school segregation for Hispanics increased to the point that Hispanics now have the dubious distinction of being not only the most undereducated group of American children, but also the most highly segregated.

Given the irregular enforcement of federal desegregation laws, absence of federal desegregation assistance funds, tight local school budgets, and the increasing number of Hispanics as a proportion of school district enrollments, this trend can probably be expected to continue into the future.

B. Comparisons Between Hispanic and Black Segregation

As Hispanic public school enrollment rose from 5.1% in 1970 to 8% in 1980, so did the segregation of Hispanic students. By 1980, Hispanics were the nation's most segregated school children:

- In 1980, 68.1% of Hispanic children attended schools with minority enrollments of 50% or higher.
- More than one-fourth of Hispanics attended schools with minority enrollments of 90-100% (See Figure 5.1). [1]
- Between 1968 and 1980, the segregation of Black students declined in every region of the country except the Northeast, while the segregation of Hispanic students increased nationwide. [2]
- Though Black students are still more likely than are Hispanic students to attend schools with minority enrollments of 90-100%, Black enrollment in the nation's most segregated schools fell by 31.1% between 1968 and 1980, while Hispanic attendance in those same schools rose during the same period by 5.7% (See Figure 5.1). [3]

C. Regional Differences

Data show that the segregation of Hispanic school children varies by region. Segregation is also the most severe in some of the areas most heavily populated by Hispanics. For example, New York, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois are among those states with the largest Hispanic public school enrollments; the highest incidence of Hispanic school segregation can also be found in those four states. [4] For example:

- The typical Hispanic student in New York attends a school that is only 21% non-minority. In New Jersey, the non-minority enrollment in public schools attended by the typical Hispanic child is 26%. In Texas, 28%; in Illinois, 32%. [5]
- Increases in Hispanic segregation vary regionally (See Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Although the Northeast is the most segregated region of the country for Hispanics, it reported the lowest increase in Hispanic public school segregation from 1968-1980. Segregation in the Midwest in 90-100% minority schools grew rapidly, nearly doubling in the last decade. Another sharp increase occurred in the West, in schools with 50-100% minority enrollment. [6]

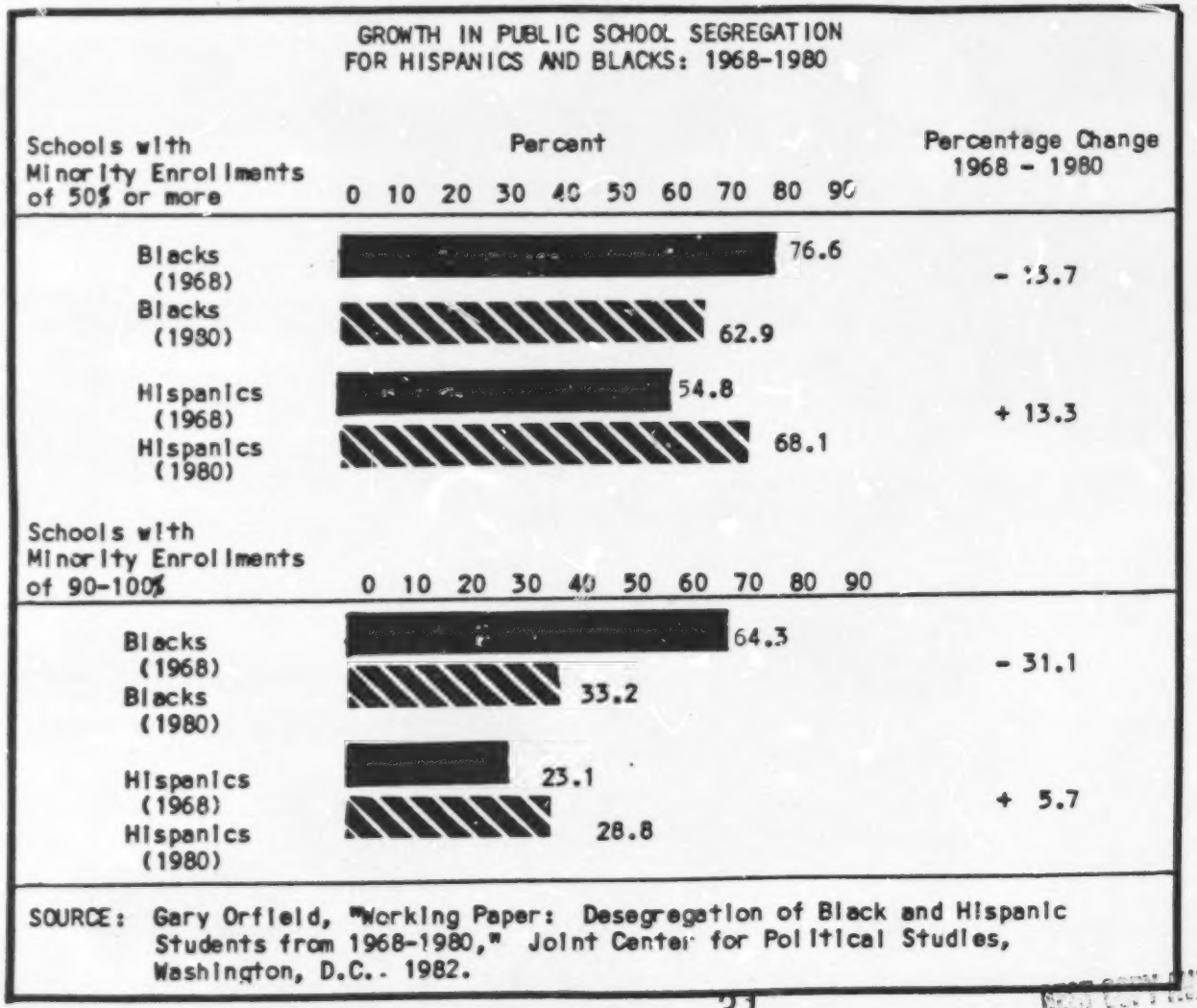
- The numerical effect of this increase in segregation is particularly dramatic in the West where 44% of Hispanic school-aged children reside. Segregation in the West rose by 21.1%. [7]

- Hispanic enrollment in extremely segregated schools -- schools with 90-100% minority enrollment -- increased most in the Midwest, where segregation of Hispanic students rose to 12.8%. In comparison, Black enrollment in Midwestern schools with 90-100% minority enrollment declined to 7.8% [8]

Attendance in a school with limited numbers of non-minority students is not the only way that Hispanic students are segregated. Even within integrated schools, Hispanic students may be segregated by classroom assignment patterns. Sometimes special education, English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual programs are used in a way that leads to segregation of Hispanic students within the school.

Hispanic children and youth, especially those of limited-English proficency, may also suffer isolation imposed by barriers of language and culture when schools fail to design instructional programs that meet their unique needs.

Figure 5.1



SOURCE: Gary Orfield, "Working Paper: Desegregation of Black and Hispanic Students from 1968-1980," Joint Center for Political Studies, Washington, D.C.. 1982.

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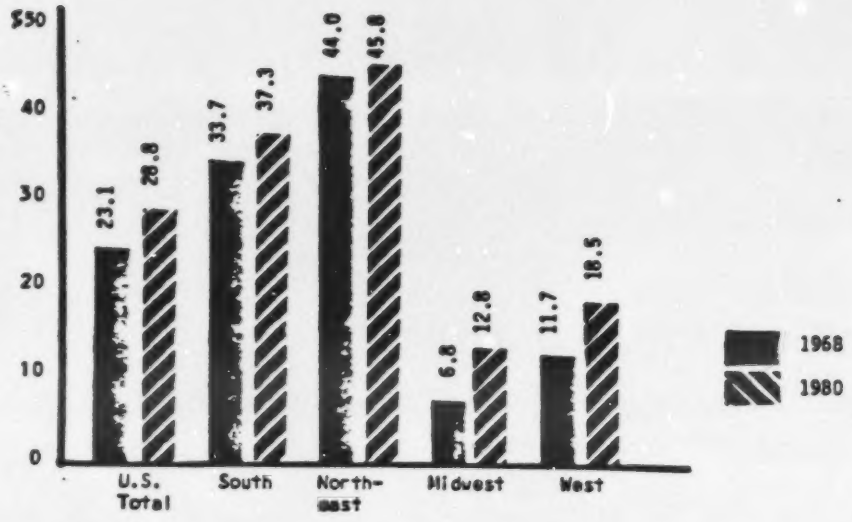
Figure 5.2

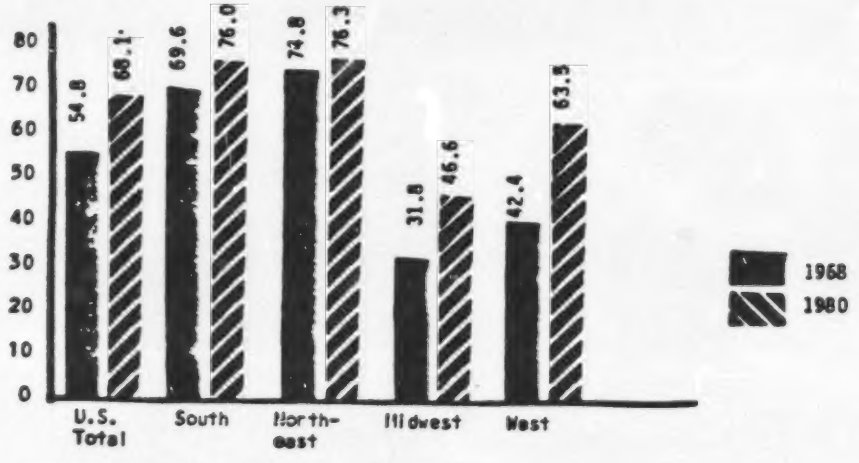
GROWTH IN HISPANIC SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WITH MINORITY ENROLLMENTS OF 90-100%:
1968-1980, BY REGION



SOURCE: Gary Orfield, "Working Paper: Desegregation of Black and Hispanic Students from 1968 to 1980," Joint Center for Political Studies, Washington, D.C., 1982.

Figure 5.3

GROWTH IN HISPANIC SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WITH MINORITY ENROLLMENTS OF 50% OR MORE:
1968-1980, BY REGION



SOURCE: Gary Orfield, "Working Paper: Desegregation of Black and Hispanic Students from 1968 to 1980," Joint Center for Political Studies, Washington, D.C., 1982.

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VI. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

A. Overview

The high proportion of Hispanics who leave school without completing a high school diploma dramatically affects the number of Hispanics eligible to attend college. Low high school completion rates mean that many Hispanics are ineligible even to apply to institutions of higher education. Of the small proportion who do attend college, many enter two-year community colleges, and most never complete a four-year degree.

B. Proportion of Eligible Youth Enrolling in College

Even among Hispanics who receive high school diplomas, about half never go to college. The high incidence of tracking of Hispanics into non-academic curricula is partly responsible for this condition since, even among the high school graduates, large numbers of Hispanics are not academically prepared to enter college.

Although 55% of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans ages 18-34 are high school graduates, in 1977 only 22% of Mexican Americans, and 25% of Puerto Ricans entered college (See Figure 5.1). 1

C. Type of Post-Secondary Education Sought

Many factors influence choice of a post-secondary institution -- grades, college entrance examination scores, financial resources, willingness to live away from home, type of course offerings sought, experience of family and friends, etc. A combination of these factors contributes to the fact that Hispanic students are more likely to attend community colleges than any other group of students, and are more likely to attend school on a part-time basis:

- Data from the 1980 High School and Beyond show that 52.7% of Hispanic students plan to attend a two-year college, compared to 39.5% of Blacks and 47.0% of Whites. 2

- More Hispanic than Black or White students also plan to attend college on a part-time basis; 44.2% of Hispanics intend to attend college part-time, compared to 32.6% of Blacks and 34.1% of Whites. 3

Since most four-year colleges and universities require the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT), students who do not take these tests are not likely to be admitted. Hispanics are less likely than other groups of students to take these tests. Although 52.9% of Hispanic high-school seniors in 1980 indicated that they planned to attend college in the next year, only 30% of those students had taken the SAT, compared to 37.0% of Blacks, and 40.5% of Whites. 4 The low percentage of Hispanic students who had taken SATs and applied to colleges may be partly due to the fact that community colleges often do not require such tests, and some do not require as much advance time for application.

In contrast to application strategies of most Black and White youth, who had applied to several schools to increase their chances of receiving an acceptance, most Hispanic seniors indicated applying to only one school. Only 47.9% of Hispanics applied for admission to one or more colleges as compared with 62.7% of Blacks, and 64.6% of Whites. 5

D. Post-Secondary Educational Attainment

Admission to college does not guarantee completion of a four-year program, nor receipt of a degree, and attrition rates for Hispanics in post-secondary institutions are high. Furthermore, despite the relative educational improvements in the last decade, college enrollments among Hispanics appear to be declining. Far fewer Hispanics than Blacks or Whites are college graduates, specifically:

- According to the 1980 Census, only 7.9% of Hispanics 25 years and over have completed four or more years of college as compared to 17.8% of Whites. 6

- In 1980-81, Hispanics earned only 2.3% of all bachelor's degrees, 1.1% of Doctor's degrees and 2.2% of all professional degrees. 7

Though the number of Hispanic college graduates has increased in recent years, educational gains have not kept pace with the growing number of college-aged Hispanics:

- Between 1975 and 1979, the population of Hispanics 18-20 increased by 8%, but the college enrollment of Hispanics aged 18-20 fell by 1.9%. 8

- Despite the appearence of increased access to higher education through affirmative action programs, proportionately fewer Hispanics attended college in 1980 than 1975. While 20.4% of Hispanics enrolled in college in 1975, only 16.1% enrolled in 1980. 9

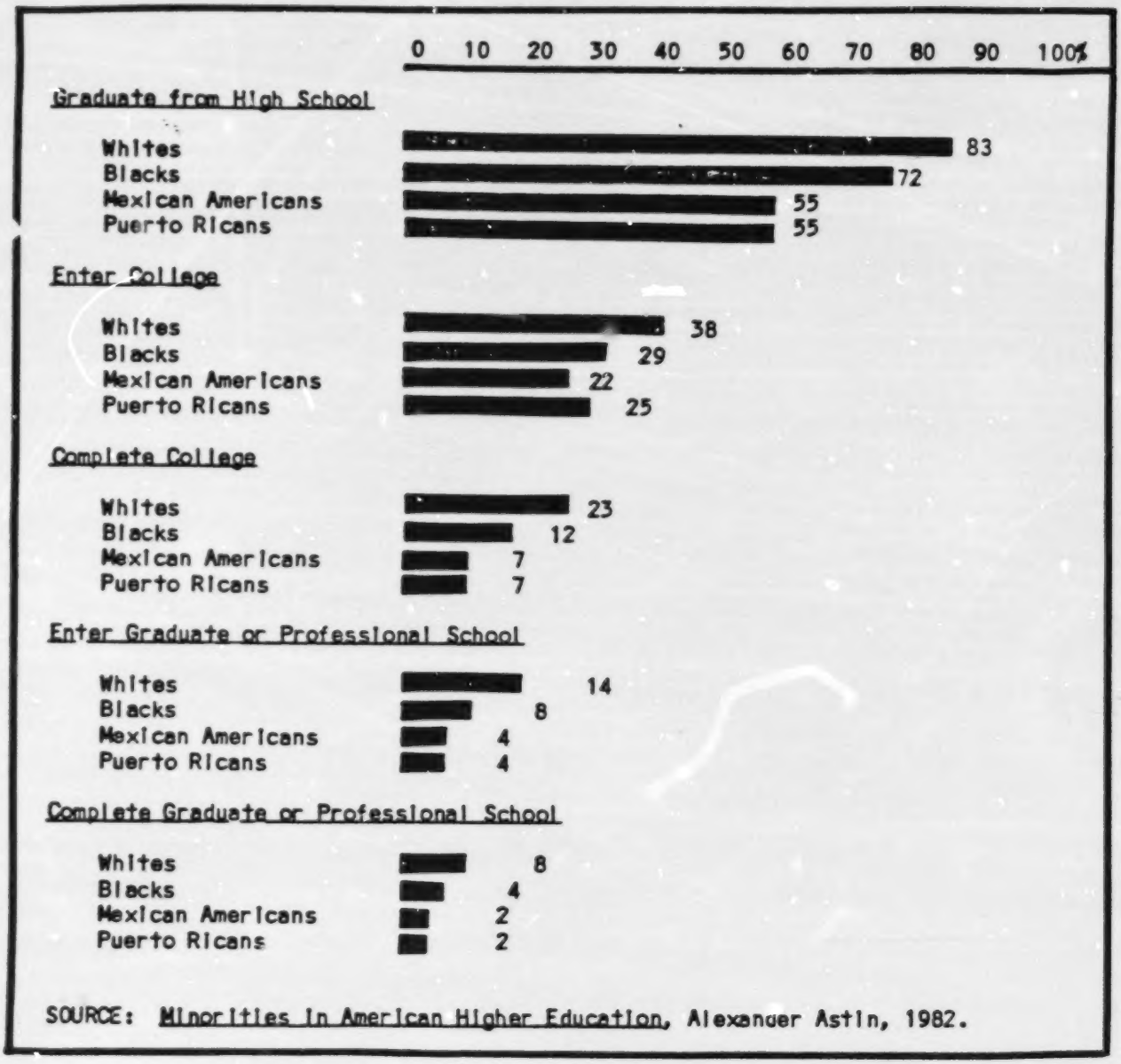
Not only are enrollments lower, but minority students are still much less likely to complete college than are White students:

- While 61% of White youth entering college earn degrees, only 31.8% of Mexican Americans and 23% of Puerto Ricans finish college.

- Blacks are the only group less likely than Hispanics to complete college. Only 24.2% of Black students who enter college complete their college education. 10

Figure 6.1

THE EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE FOR MINORITIES



SOURCE: Minorities in American Higher Education, Alexander Astin, 1982.

ENDNOTES

I. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

1 Bureau of the Census; 1980 Census, "General Population Characteristics," U.S. Summary.

2 Bureau of the Census; 1980 Census, Supplementary Report, "Persons of Spanish Origin by State: 1980.", PC 30-S1-7.

3 Bureau of the Census; 1979 Current Population Survey, Unpublished tabulations.

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4 National Catholic Educational Association. U.S. Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 1982-83, Data Bank Book.

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